

Weekly Situation Report
Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS)
April 8, 2003
From: Billy Causey

HOT TOPICS AND HEADS UP:

We had a South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force meeting last week in Tallahassee. Tim Keeney participated representing DOC and NOAA. Much of the first day focused on a GAO report that addressed the Working Group's Science Coordination Team – the report was critical in that the SCT is under-utilized, not focused with priorities from the Task Force and needs to be staffed. The second day of the meeting focused on coastal issues and Tim Keeney gave a powerpoint presentation about NOAA's role and trusteeship in coastal issues.

There was a Water Quality Steering Committee meeting in Marathon on April 3. Items on the agenda included: Appointing Greg DiDomenico (Executive Director, Monroe County Commercial Fishermen) Jody Thomas (The Nature Conservancy) and Sandra Walters (consultant) to the Committee. There were updates on water quality monitoring, seagrass and coral monitoring – GOOD NEWS: Coral Growth has remained level – now 4 years in a row!! The Committee passed a resolution supporting the City of Key West Stormwater Plan.

On April 9, LCDR Dave Score will attend a meeting on the Biscayne National Park General Management Plan revision that is underway.

LCDR Dave Score will be representing FKNKMS at the Biscayne Bay Regional Restoration Coordination Team meeting on April 11. The BBRRCT is comprised of representatives of Local, State, and Federal agencies and serves as an advisory body to the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Working Group on matters related to Biscayne Bay.

Richard Lightner submitted a final report on 2/25/03 for the site known as the Candelaria, Admiralty Claim 83-1218-CIV-JWK from previous S/I permit, #FKNMS-99-014. The report was reviewed and accepted, a new Survey and Inventory (S/I) permit #FKNMS-2003-014 was written and sent to the permittee, the signed accepted permit was returned 4/7/03 thus authorizing Mr. Lightner to continue operations.

NOAA Technical Memorandum / NOS MEMD # NA87AA-H-CZ007 was translated from its original 5 1/4 inch floppy discs to CD. The 1988 memorandum is An Inventory of Shipwrecks, Groundings, and Cultural Marine Resources within the Key Largo National Marine Sanctuary Region. The memorandum has been a most valuable resource previously available in hard copy form only. The Principal Investigator, Judith Halas obtained information for this memorandum by studying microfilm documents from the National Archives, 18 volumes of admiralty final record books, dated 1829-1911.

The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary was represented at Ocean Day at the State Capitol in Tallahassee. Ocean Day is an annual event sponsored by the Florida Ocean Alliance, a nonpartisan organization dedicated to bringing together government, academic, and private sectors to protect and enhance Florida's coastal and ocean resources. The Sanctuary's booth, staffed by Education Specialist Nancy Diersing, consisted of interactive stations designed to educate people about protecting and managing the coral reefs of the Florida Keys. Ocean Day was well-attended by students, 4-H members, and Capitol staffers.

Team OCEAN coordinators attended the monthly Keys Association of Dive Operators meeting. The focus of the meeting was on the upcoming DEMA Show in Miami Beach.

Team OCEAN coordinators manned an FKNMS booth at MarineQuest, an annual event held at FWC's Florida Marine Research Institute in St. Pete over the weekend.

CONGRESSIONAL ACTIVITIES:

Nothing to report.

PRESS – MEDIA ISSUES:

Florida Scuba News and the Florida Keys Keynoter interviewed Dave Score of the FKNMS, Tane Casserley of the Monitor National Marine Sanctuary and Doug Kesling of NURC about continuing about the Queen of Nassau project

“Guard finds illegal product,” regarding Coast Guard busts in Tortugas Ecological Reserve, Florida Keys Keynoter, Saturday, April 5, 2003

Cheva Heck discussed Water Quality Steering Committee meeting monitoring updates and Sanctuary Advisory Council meeting agenda on US 1 Radio’s “Morning Magazine,” Monday, April 7th, 2003

Cheva Heck taped interview with Jamie Hyman, news director for Clear Channel Radio Upper Keys on Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary monitoring updates presented at Water Quality Steering Committee, Monday, April 7, 2003

“Scientist: Nutrients threaten seagrass,” The Key West Citizen, Monday, April 7, 2003, regarding monitoring updates at the Water Quality Steering Committee (info provided by Cheva after the meeting)

Cheva Heck continued working with NOAA Fisheries Marine Mammal Stranding Network staff on strategies for improving media coverage. Cheva, Blair Mase and Laura Engleby met with Tim O’Hara of the Free Press/Key West Citizen and Pat Beegle of the Independent. Local media continued coverage of stranding network issues, including a suspension in the use of natural lagoons for rehab until USFW representatives can review these

facilities to determine whether they overlap with critical manatee habitat. NOAA Fisheries indicates the Keys are the only place in the country where natural lagoons rather than tanks or pools are used for rehab.

Cheva Heck participated in conference call with Laura Engleby, Trevor Spradlin and Ali Hudon of NOAA Fisheries regarding concerns about dolphin watch charters in Key West. The result was that Ali Hudon will attend April 8, 2003 SAC meeting to present NOAA Fisheries rules and guidelines on marine mammal viewing and a program they are developing to work with charter operators. Sheri Sullenger of the Florida Keys Wild Dolphin Alliance will be presenting information on the alliance and on the current situation with dolphin watch charters in Key West.

Bill Goodwin will be giving a multi-media presentation on the FKNMS Damage Assessment and Restoration program at the DIGA dive club in South Miami, 4/10/03. DIGA is one of Florida's oldest and most active SCUBA clubs, whose members have a keen interest in the health and welfare of the South Florida marine ecosystem. Two DIGA members are also FKNMS Reef Medics volunteers, and it is hoped that this presentation will encourage others in the club to become involved.